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## Medieval berber orthography.

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### Introduction

In the Middle Ages, Berber was written in the Maghribi style of the Arabic script, in what is to all appearances a standardized orthography. The earliest known examples of the medieval Berber spelling date from the middle of the 10th century A.D., while the youngest examples date from the 14th century.

Although there is some variation in the representation of a number of consonants, the orthography is remarkably consistent. In this respect it is quite unlike the early orthographies of the European vernaculars, where the same word is often written in different ways even within one line of text. This consistency implies that the Berber orthography was consciously designed, and that it was formally taught to berberophones.

It is to be noted that the highest consistency is found in the oldest manuscripts. Copies of medieval texts dating from the post-medieval period, when the old orthography had fallen into disuse, show varying degrees of corruption. This is partly due to some copyists being non-berberophones. Other copies were made by speakers of Tashelhit, which from the end of the 16th century up to the present has been written in a spelling which is fundamentally different from the medieval orthography (see on this orthography van den Boogert, 1997, chapter 3).

This article will first present a concise survey of the available sources, followed by an explanation of the rules and conventions of the orthography<sup>1</sup>. It is hoped that this will enable future editors to transcribe and interpret medieval Berber materials more accurately than has hitherto been the case.

## The sources

The sources for our knowledge of the medieval orthography are much more numerous than one might think. In fact, a number of these sources have been available in print for quite some time, although Berberologists have so far failed to exploit them. The sources can be divided into four groups:

(1) Pharmacological manuals. Almost all works on this subject that were written in the Maghrib contain a number of Berber names of plants and animals, sometimes only a handful, but in some cases more than a hundred. The following published sources were consulted for this article:

- Ibn 'Abdūn of Seville, (fl. 1100 A.D.), *'Umdat al-ṭabīb* (ed. al-Khaṭṭābī, 1990 and 1996), contains more than 250 Berber names of plants.<sup>2</sup>
- Ibn Beklāresh of Saragossa, *al-Musta'īnī* (written ca. 1000 A.D.), contains some forty Berber names. Most of these are quoted by Renaud in an article (1930) and in his annotations to the edition of the *Tuhfa*. Some names are mentioned by Dozy in his *Supplément*.
- Maimonides of Cordova (d. 601/1204), *Sharh Asmā' al-'Uqqār* (ed. and tr. Meyerhof, 1940), contains 27 Berber names of plants.
- 'Abdallāh ibn Šāliḥ al-Kutāmi (early 13th c. A.D.), commentary on Dioscurides (ed. and tr. Dietrich, 1988), contains more than 170 Berber names of plants and animals.
- Ibn al-Baiṭār of Malaga (d. 646/1248), *al-Jāmi'* (ed. Boulaq, 1874-5, tr. Leclerc, 1877-83, contains some 55 Berber names of plants and animals. These Berber materials were studied by René Basset in an article (1899); his transcriptions are generally imprecise and he presents only 41 out of 55 names.
- Ibn al-Ḥassān (13th c. A.D.), *Kitāb Muḥīd al-'Ulūm* (ed. Colin and Renaud, 1941), contains 14 Berber names.

The editions by al-Khaṭṭābī of Ibn 'Abdūn, and the Boulaq edition of Ibn al-Baiṭār are not up to modern scientific standards, but they are serviceable for our present purpose. Some important pharmacological manuals containing Berber materials remain unpublished, among them works by az-Zahrāwī (Abulcasis), as-Suwaidi and al-Idrīsī (on whom see Ullmann, 1970, pp. 149-151, 284, 278).

Berber names of plants in medieval spelling are often quoted in post-medieval sources, among them:

- al-Ghassānī (second half 16th c.), *ḥadiqat al-Azhār* (ed. al-Khaṭṭābī, 1985), 36 Berber names.
- Anonymous, *Tuhfat al-Aḥbāb* (ed. and tr. Renaud and Colin, 1934), ca 85 Berber names.
- al-Jazā'irī (fl. 1130/1717-8), *Kashf ar-Rumūz* (tr. Leclerc, 1874), ca 50 Berber names.

(2) Arabic works on history, geography and biography. Four of these sources were examined for this article:

- The anonymous *Kitāb al-Ansāb* (ed. and tr. Lévi-Provençal, 1928).
- The memoirs of Abī Bakr ibn 'Alī aṣ-Ṣanhājī, a close companion of Ibn Tumert, known by the nickname al-Baiḥaq 'the Pawn' (ed. and tr. Lévi-Provençal, 1928). These two texts, written in 12th and 13th centuries A.D., deal with the early history of the Almohads. They contain hundreds of personal names, tribal names and place names as well as a dozen phrases in Berber. Marcy has tried, with scant success, to transcribe and translate the phrases in an article (1932).
- al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094), *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik* (ed. de Slane, 1857), contains many Berber place-names.<sup>3</sup>
- al-Tādīlī (d. 627/1229-30), *at-Tashawwuf*, a biographical dictionary of South-Moroccan saints of the 5th-7th centuries A.H. (ed. Faure, 1958), contains many Berber personal names.

(3) The Arabic-Berber dictionary *Kitāb al-Asmā'* compiled in the year in 540/1146 by Ibn Tunart (ابن تونارت), 478-567 A.H., 1085-1172 A.D.). This is the richest source for medieval Berber, containing more than 2,500 Berber words and phrases, including more than 250 names of plants.<sup>4</sup>

(4) The 'Leiden fragment' (Leiden ms. Or. 23.306). This is a unique fragment consisting of one leaf from a medieval manuscript (possibly 14th c.). The leaf contains a total of sixteen lines of continuous Berber text, written in calligraphic script. The subject of the text is ethics. This fragment may be seen as the 'smoking gun': apart from its mere existence, its contents as well as its external appearance are clear evidence that a mature and well-established written tradition in Berber existed in the medieval period. An edition and full analysis of the Leiden fragment is being prepared by the present author.

In the following exposition the rules and conventions of medieval Berber spelling will be illustrated mainly with plant names taken from the above-mentioned pharmacological handbooks and from Ibn Tunart's dictionary.

Judging from the Leiden fragment, medieval Berber texts appear to have been written with full vocalization. In most of the other sources, Berber words are fully or partially unvocalized. The examples below will be quoted without vocalization. In cases where it is necessary to know the full vocalization, a transliteration will be given between square brackets.

## Word-internal vowels

Medieval Berber orthography distinguishes four vowels: *a*, *i*, *u* and *e* (*schwa*). In word-internal position, the vowels *a*, *i* and *u* are written with the *ḥurūf al-madd*: *alif* represents *a*, *ya'* represents *i* and *wāw* represents *u*.<sup>5</sup>

تاسافت	<i>tasafi</i>	'oak'
تيزنيرت	<i>tiznirt</i>	'fan palm'
تولوليت	<i>tululit</i>	'caper'

In unvocalized script, the central vowel *e* (*schwa*) is not represented in word-internal position. *Schwa* may also occur in open syllables:

تاماشت	<i>tamenmašt</i>	'tamarisk'
تاسلت	<i>tasselt</i>	'laurel'
يلودی	<i>yeludi</i>	'Ranunculus sp.'

In fully vocalized script, *schwa* is most frequently written with *fatha*. In some sources it is written with *kasra*.

#### Word-initial vowels

In the *Kitāb al-Anṣāb* and in the memoirs of al-Baidhaq, initial *i-* and *u-* are regularly written with *alif-madda* followed by *yī* and *wīw*. Initial *a-* is written with *alif-madda* preceded by a high 'chairless' *hamza*:

آیت ورسان	<i>Ayet Wersanen</i>
آیفشتالن	<i>Ifēštalen</i>
آوغزاغن	<i>Uyazfen</i>

The other sources contain only one example of an initial vowel other than *a-* written with *alif-madda* (Tulfa no 17):

آوداد	<i>udad</i>	'Barbary sheep'
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This use of *madda* to indicate the presence of a word-initial vowel, *a-* as well as *i-* and *u-*, is typical of medieval Berber orthography. It is clearly a divergence from contemporary Arabic usage.

In fully or partially vocalized forms in Ibn Tunart's *Kitāb al-Asmā'*, initial *a-* is written either with *alif-madda*, or with *alif-madda* with preceding low chairless *hamza*, or with *alif* with preceding *hamza*:

آمکراز	<i>amekraz</i>	'plowman'
آادرار	<i>adrar</i>	'Chinese lantern'
آاغاز	<i>aḡaz</i>	'fruit of the fan palm'

These spellings of initial *a-* are also occasionally found in the other sources, especially *alif-madda*.

In vocalized forms, Ibn Tunart writes initial *i-* with *alif* with subscript *hamza*, followed by *yā'*:

إيردن	<i>irden</i>	'wheat'
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Initial *u-* is written with *alif* with *hamza* written through its middle (reproduced here with superscript *hamza* for typographical reasons), followed by *wāw*:

أوماد	<i>ummad</i>	'diss grass'
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Word-initial *schwa* is represented by *alif* (with superscript *fatha* in vocalized text):

افسوا	<i>efsu</i>	'card (wool)!'
انسی	<i>ennes</i>	'of him'
وار الاغ	<i>war ellay</i>	'dodder' <sup>8</sup>

In the other sources, Berber words are usually left unvocalized. When a word is written without vocalization, word-initial *a-* is written with *alif* and word-initial *i-* and *u-* are written with *alif* followed by the appropriate *larf al-madd*:

ادمام	<i>admam</i>	'medlar'
ايغري	<i>iḡrey</i>	'asphodel'
اوكان	<i>ukkan</i>	'Caralluma europea'

Note that in the absence of vocalization, word-initial *alif-wāw* may represent either *u-* or *aw-* and *alif-yā'* may represent either *i-* or *ay-*:

اوماد	<i>ummad</i>	'diss grass'
اوسرغينت	<i>awserḡint</i>	'Corrigiola telephiifolia'
ايزرى	<i>izrey</i>	'wormwood'
ايرني	<i>ayerni</i>	'friar's cowl'

On some examples in the work of Ibn al-Baiḡār of a divergent way of spelling word-initial vowels see below.

In order to present as clear a picture as possible, in the examples quoted below word-initial vowels will be written with simple *alif*, without *hamza* and/or *madda*, irrespective of the spelling found in the source.

#### Word-final vowels

Word-final *-a* is regularly written with *alif*. It is occasionally written with *alif maqṣūra* or with *hā'*:

تايدا	tayda	'pine'
تورزی	turza	'apple of Sodom'
تاسلیقه	tasli'wa	'carob'

Word-final *-i* is written with *yā'*, usually without its diacritical dots:

اسلیلی	aslili	'dill'
تیبی	tibi	'mallow'

Word-final *wāw*, representing either the vowel *-u* or the consonant *-w*, is often followed by an *alif*. This *alif* is a purely graphical device, and does not represent a vowel:

وايللوا	waylellu	'henbane'
خيزوا	xizzu	'carrots'
افرسیوا	afersiw	'fern'
تيلفاوا	tilfaw	'lupin'

In the modern standard orthography of Arabic this so-called *alif al-wiqāya* 'prophylactic *alif*' is written with plural verbal forms only. In the spelling of the Koran it is used more widely, e.g. II 269 اولوا *ālū* 'l-*albābi*, XIII 39 يمحوا الله *yamḥū* 'Llāhu.

### The consonants

The representation of the following consonants poses no problems:

ب	<i>b</i>	ايباون	<i>ibawen</i>	'beans'
ت	<i>t</i>	تيببتاست	<i>tibitast</i>	'beet'
خ	<i>x</i>	تيزخت	<i>tizext</i>	'willow'
د	<i>d</i>	امراد	<i>amrad</i>	'acacia'
ر	<i>r</i>	ارماس	<i>armas</i>	'orache'
ز	<i>z</i>	ازنزوا	<i>azenzu</i>	'clematis'
س	<i>s</i>	اساسنوا	<i>asasnu</i>	'strawberry tree'
ش	<i>š</i>	تاشنتيت	<i>tašentit</i>	'rye'
غ	<i>ɣ</i>	تاغيفيت	<i>taɣeyɣeyt</i>	'soapwort'
ف	<i>f</i>	تيفاف	<i>tifaf</i>	'chicory'
ك	<i>k</i>	ايكيكر	<i>ikiker</i>	'chick peas'
ل	<i>l</i>	اليلى	<i>alili</i>	'oleander'
م	<i>m</i>	ادمام	<i>admam</i>	'medlar'
ن	<i>n</i>	انلى	<i>anli</i>	'sorghum'
ه	<i>h</i>	ترهلا	<i>terrehla</i>	'agrimony'
و	<i>w</i>	وامسا	<i>wamsa</i>	'fennel'
ي	<i>y</i>	تارياى	<i>taryal</i>	'mandrake'

The spelling of the consonants *ḍ*, *ẓ*, *g* and *ẓ* is more complicated. Before looking at how these consonants are written, it is useful to take a brief look at the way in which a borrowed script is adjusted to represent consonants that are not present in the language for which the script was originally designed. An almost universally applied method of adaptation is to write a consonant for which the borrowed script has no separate letter with the letter that represents its nearest equivalent in the perception of the native speaker. This is usually its voiced or voiceless counterpart. For example, in early Persian orthography, the consonant *g* was written with the letter *kāf*, which also represented Persian *k*. In the same manner, the Persian consonant *ḍ* was written with the letter *ḡim*, which also represented Persian *ḡ*. This method was also applied in the representation of Berber consonants for which the Arabic script has no separate letter.

Thus, the consonant *ḍ* is written with *ḍā'* (voiceless counterpart):

انلكوط	<i>anelkuḍ</i>	'borage'
تيكيطا	<i>tikiḍa</i>	'carobs'

Note that at the time when the Berber orthography was devised, the letter *ض*, which in modern transcription systems is usually transcribed as *ḍ*, probably did not represent a dental stop *ḍ* but rather an interdental or lateral fricative. In any case, Arabic *ḍ* was apparently perceived as the nearest equivalent to Berber *ḍ* and hence the letter *ḍā'* was chosen to represent *ḍ*. Note also that Arabic *ḍ* is replaced with *f* in loanwords, e.g. Arabic *ṭabib* 'doctor' becomes *adbib* in Berber. It is also possible, though not probable, that medieval Berber had *f* instead of *ḍ* (voiceless *f* is still found in some dialects, e.g. in Jabal Nafusa and the Middle Atlas).

The letter *ḍā'* also represents *ḥ* (tense counterpart of *ḍ*):

اگطوم	<i>ageṭṭum</i>	'twig'
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The consonant *ẓ* is written either with *zīy* (non-pharyngealized counterpart) or with *ẓid* (voiceless counterpart):

تافريزيت	<i>taferziṭt</i>	'colocynth'
اصوكا	<i>azuka</i>	'thuya'

The sources contain an explicit statement that the letter *ẓid* represents *ẓ*: Ibn al-ḥaṣṣā' mentions the name *alezzaḡ* 'Daphne gnidium' and indicates its pronunciation by adding the phrase *bayn aṣ-ṣād wa-z-zāy*, 'between *ṣ* and *z*', i.e. a consonant which is pharyngealized like *ṣ* and voiced like *z*<sup>10</sup>.

Ibn Tunart consistently uses *ṣād* to write *ṣ*. In the other sources there seems to be free variation between *zīy* and *ṣād*.

In a few rare cases, the letter *šād* represents *ṣ*:

تبيّنصرت	<i>tibiṣert</i>	'marsh mallow'
أصغر	<i>aṣṣer</i>	'wood, bush'

In the case of the well-attested plant name *tibiṣert*, the *ṣ* can be explained etymologically, as this name appears to be a contraction of *ان مصري tibi en Meṣer* 'mallow of Egypt' (original form mentioned by Ibn Tunart). In the case of *aṣṣer*, the spelling represents the form [*aṣṣer*] (the emphatic *r* is never distinguished from *r* in the spelling) which is a variant of *أصغر aṣṣer* (also attested).

The consonant *g* is written either with *ḡim*, *kāf* or *qif*:

إيدجل	<i>idgel</i>	'cedar'
انكارف	<i>angaref</i>	'chaste tree'
امزقور	<i>amezqur</i>	'sorghum'

One plant name is found in the sources with all three spellings:

ارجان	<i>argan</i>	'argan'
اركان	id.	'id.'
ارقان	id.	'id.'

Note that the name *argan* denotes a tree (*Argania spinosa*) which does not grow in berberophone areas where original *g* can become *ḡ*. It is therefore certain that *ḡim* represents *g*, as the form \**arian* does not exist.

That *ḡim* represented *g* can also be deduced from the spelling of some Arabic nisbas. For instance, members of the Tashelhit-speaking High Atlas tribe whose modern name is *Igdmīwn* use the nisba *الجدميوي al-Jadmīwī*,<sup>12</sup> which is derived from the medieval Berber spelling *إيجمييون Igedmīwen*.

The letter *qāf* also represents *qq* (tense counterpart of *ḡ*):

ازقور	<i>azeqqur</i>	'tree-trunk'
تيقي	<i>tiqqi</i>	'juniper'

In most sources the choice between *ḡim* or *kāf* for *g* appears to be free. *qāf* is consistently used by Ibn 'Abdūn, but it is rare in the other sources. It is probable that the variation between *ḡim* and *kāf* is the result of historical developments (see below).

The consonant *ḡ* is written with *ḡim* or *šin*:

اناشل	<i>anašel</i>	'bramble'
تونجيفين	<i>tunžifin</i>	'pearl barley'

Ibn 'Abdūn of Seville, who mentions the name *إيش izš* 'terebinth' (a Zenatic form), precisely indicates the pronunciation of *šin* by adding the phrase *bayn aš-šin wa-z-zāy*, 'between *š* and *z*', i.e. a consonant which is palatal like *š* and voiced like *z*.<sup>13</sup>

Note that *ḡḡ* is always written with *ḡim*:

ازجيج	<i>azeḡḡig</i>	'flower'
تازجاشت	<i>tazeḡḡait</i>	'convalescence'

The variation found in the representation of *g* and *ḡ* is probably the result of phonological changes that took place in the spoken Arabic of the Maghrib. It is possible to distinguish two basic stages in the development of the Berber orthography, as set out in the table below.

	Stage 1		Stage 2	
letter	Arabic	Berber	Arabic	Berber
ج	<i>g</i> or <i>ḡ</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>ḡ</i> or <i>ž</i>	<i>ž</i>
ش	<i>š</i>	<i>š</i> + <i>ž</i>	<i>š</i>	<i>š</i>
ك	<i>k</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>k</i> + <i>g</i>

At stage 1, the letter *ḡim* was chosen to represent Berber *g*. At this time, *ḡim* must have represented Arabic *g*, or perhaps *ī*. We have no knowledge of any variety of Arabic spoken in the Maghrib that has or had *g* or *ḡ* corresponding to *ḡim*. An indication that such a dialect may once have existed is perhaps found in the Berber loanword *timeḡgida* 'mosque', which corresponds to an Arabic form \**meḡgida* or \**meḡḡida* rather than the attested *mešjid* or *meḡḡid* (standard *masjid*).<sup>14</sup> In addition, Ibn Tunart mentions a form *ايتكارن iteggaren* 'traders', cf. Arabic *taẓer* (standard *fiḡir*) 'trader'.

At stage 1, the letter *ḡim* could not be used for Berber *ž*, so that *šin* (voiceless counterpart) was chosen instead.

At stage 2, Arabic *g* had changed to *ḡ* or to *ž*, so that *šin* became available to write Berber *ž*. Berber *g* was then written with *kāf* (voiceless counterpart).

The Leiden fragment is the only source which consistently uses *kāf* for *g*, and which can thus be taken as representing stage 2. No source is available at present which represents stage 1. All other sources seem to represent an intermediate, transitional stage in the development of Berber orthography:

## Intermediate stage

letter	Arabic	Berber
ج	ǧ or ʒ	ǰ + g
ش	š	š + ʒ
ك	k	k + g

The most illuminating example of this intermediate stage is provided by the *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, in which *g* is written with *ǧīm* or *kāf* and in a few cases with *ǧīm* with a small superscript *kāf*. In the printed edition, Lévi-Provençal has more or less systematically substituted *kāf* with three superscript dots (a post-medieval innovation) for *ǧīm* or *kāf* representing *g*. The original spelling with *ǧīm* + superscript *kāf* can be seen in the facsimiles, cf. plate II, line 1, ابو وزج, *Abū Wezreg* and plate IV, line 13, جزولة, *Guzūla*<sup>15</sup>.

The retention of *ǧīm* to write *g*, and of *šīm* to write *š*, long after Arabic *ǧ/š* had changed to *ǧ/š*, is the result of the inertia that is characteristic of an established orthography.

## Labialization

The labialization of velar consonants is indicated in vocalized script with the vowel sign *famma*, which may be written either on the letter representing the velar itself or on the preceding letter :

تاقيت	[tāluqqīt]	<i>taleggʷit</i>	'white broom'
اكار	[ākūʔar]	<i>akʷtar</i>	'yarrow' <sup>16</sup>
تاغندست	[taɣundast]	<i>taɣʷendest</i>	'pellitory'
يدختن	[yadduxtan]	<i>yeddxʷten</i>	'mistletoe' <sup>17</sup>

## Ibn al-Baiṭār's spelling of vowels

A divergent system to represent word-initial *a-* in Berber plant names is encountered in the initial entries in Ibn al-Baiṭār's *Jāmiʿ*. This system is also found in other sources, but only for initial *i-* in the Arabic transcription of Greek plant names.

Ibn al-Baiṭār's entries nos 2-6 are all Berber plant names. The initial vowel *a-* is written with *alif-madda*, followed by a second *alif*:

أطريلال	<i>aḍereyāl</i>	'false bishop's weed'
أكار	<i>akʷtar</i>	'yarrow'
أارغيس	<i>aɾɣis</i>	'barberry'
أميليس	<i>ameliles</i>	'buckthorn'
أاقشروا	<i>agešru</i>	(unidentified)

The same spelling is used in entry no 1, which is a Greek name<sup>18</sup> :

ألसन *ālusan* 'alyssum', Gr. αλυσσον

The logic behind this convention is that in this way all initial vowels are written with *alif* followed by the appropriate *ḥarf al-madd*, i.e. *alif-wāw* for *u-*, *alif-yāʾ* for *i-* and *alif-alif* for *a-*.

Beginning with entry no 7 (Arabic *abhal* 'savin'), Ibn al-Baiṭār has abandoned this cumbersome spelling of initial *a-*. In the remaining part of his work, initial *a-* is written with single *alif* in Berber as well as in Arabic and Greek names. The other Berber names with initial *a-* presented as main entries in the *bāb al-alif* are :

اداد	<i>addad</i>	'atractylis'
ادرييس	<i>aderyis</i>	'thapsia'
ارجان	<i>argan</i>	'argan'
ازرود	<i>azrud</i>	'melilot'

Another practice which Ibn al-Baiṭār quickly abandoned is the explicit description of the vocalization of a name. This is found in his first five entries, and sporadically in the rest of the book. From these explicit vocalizations it appears that Ibn al-Baiṭār used *kasra* instead of *fatha* to represent *schwa* (explicit vocalization between square brackets):

أطريلال	[āṭiriylāl]	<i>aḍereyāl</i>
أكار	[ākūʔar]	<i>akʷtar</i>
أارغيس	[āriyis]	<i>aɾɣis</i>
أميليس	[āmiliylis]	<i>ameliles</i>

In the older spelling of Arabic, the *ḥurūf al-madd* representing the long vowels *ī* and *ū* could be written with or without *sukūn*<sup>19</sup>. Thus, in the spelling of Berber *aɾɣis*, the vowel *i* is explicitly written with *ṭayn maksūra* and *yāʾ sākina*, i.e. *ṭayn* with *kasra* and *yāʾ* with *sukūn*<sup>20</sup>. However, since Ibn al-Baiṭār uses *kasra* to represent *schwa*, this spelling may also represent Berber *-ey-*, as in *aḍereyāl*, explicitly written with *rāʾ maksūra* and *yāʾ sākina*.

## Arabic loans

Arabic loanwords in medieval Berber largely retain their original spelling. They are borrowed with the Arabic definite article, which is semantically 'neutralized'. *Tāʾ marbūta* is usually replaced with *tāʾ*:

الترنج	<i>etterenz<sup>21</sup></i>	'citron', Ar. <i>ar-turiṅṅ</i>
الميمون	<i>elmeymun</i>	'bryony', Ar. <i>al-maymūn</i>
الفصت	<i>elfešset</i>	'lucerne', Ar. <i>al-ḥiṣṣa(t)</i>

In some cases the spelling is changed to reflect Berber pronunciation:

الدونيت	<i>edduneyt</i>	'world', Ar. <i>ad-dunyā</i>
الشمشيت	<i>eššīšeyt</i>	'bonnet', Ar. <i>aš-šāšīya(t)</i>

#### Notes on phonology and morphology

No full survey of Medieval Berber grammar will be attempted here; only some of the more salient features will be pointed out.

(1) The vowel *a* is sometimes (though not regularly) reduced to *e* before the consonant *r*, e.g. <sup>22</sup>:

medieval	Tashelhit	
تازرت	<i>tazert</i>	<i>tazart</i> 'figs'
اسغر	<i>asʿer</i>	<i>asʿar</i> 'wood, bush'
تامرت	<i>tamert</i>	<i>tamart</i> 'beard'

(2) Plurals with nominal prefixes *u-* and *tu-* occur frequently where corresponding forms in the modern Berber languages have *i-* and *ti-*:<sup>23</sup>

medieval	Tashelhit	
اوكرمودن	<i>ukermuden</i>	<i>ikrmudn</i> 'leguminous plants'
توروفين	<i>turufin</i>	<i>tirufin</i> 'roasted barley'

Tashelhit is in fact the only Berber language for which comparable forms are attested, e.g. *tumʒin* 'barley', *tumʒarin* 'women' (*timʒin*, *timʒarin* in other languages).

(3) The forms of the *état d'annexion* of masculine nouns are as follows:

اجليد	<i>agellid</i>	'king'	<i>état libre</i>
وجليد	<i>wegellid</i>		<i>état d'annexion</i>
اصروا	<i>aʒru</i>	'stone'	é.l.
وصروا	<i>wəʒru</i>		é.a.
امان	<i>aman</i>	'water'	é.l.
وامان	<i>waman</i>		é.a.

أيغف	<i>iʒef</i>	'head'	é.l.
يغف	<i>yeʒef</i>		é.a.
ايگران	<i>igran</i>	'fields'	é.l.
يگران	<i>yegran</i>		é.a.
ايئل	<i>ilel</i>	'sea'	é.l.
يئل	<i>yilel</i>		é.a.
اوشن	<i>uššen</i>	'jackal'	é.l.
ووشن	<i>wuššen</i>		é.a.

The construct states with *we-* and *ye-* have consistently been transcribed incorrectly in the past, viz. with initial vowels *i-* or *u-* (e.g. \**ugellid* instead of *wegellid*). The letters *yā* and *wāw* in word-initial position always represent the consonants *y-* and *w-*. The vowels *i-* and *u-* in word-initial position can only be written with *alif* followed by *yā* c.q. *wāw*.

(4) The *état d'annexion* is found, among others, in possessive constructions:

تونين ان وجليد	<i>tunin en wegellid</i>	'wells of the king'
تيسنت ان وصروا	<i>tisent en weʒru</i>	'salt of stone'
ايديد ان وامان	<i>ayeddid en waman</i>	'sack of water'
انكاص ان يغف	<i>angaz en yeʒef</i>	'pain of the head'
تووظفا ان يگران	<i>tuwedfa en yegran</i>	'possession of fields'
اطوا ان يئل	<i>aḍu en yilel</i>	'wind of the sea'
اطيل ان ووشن	<i>aḍil en wuššen</i>	'grape of the jackal'

Other examples include:

ايكر ان وسنان	<i>iger en wesennan</i>	'field of thorns'
ايمي ان تكمي	<i>imi en tegemmi</i>	'entrance of the house'
تابزوغت ان تيلي	<i>tabezuʒt en tili</i>	'ear of the ewe'
تاغزوت ان والوط	<i>taʒzut en waluḍ</i>	'valley of mud'
تامارت ان تاغاط	<i>tamart en taʒuṭ</i>	'beard of the goat'
تارقا ان وودي	<i>targa en wudi</i>	'canal of butter'
تيمي ان وامان	<i>tibi en waman</i>	'mallow of the water'
تيلت ان يشرפט	<i>tilett en yenerfed</i>	'herb of the spleen'

In many possessive constructions, the preposition *en* 'of' is omitted, while the possessor remains in the *état d'annexion*:

امان يسيدان	<i>aman yesidan</i>	'water of ostriches'
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اسغر يفتجد	<i>aşer yeḥẓed</i> 'shrub of the kid'
اصغر يفتيقر	<i>aşer yefīḡer</i> 'shrub of the serpent'
تافروت ووشن	<i>tafrut wuṣṣen</i> 'knife of the jackal'
تامرت ومسون	<i>taṃert Wemsun</i> 'beard of Amoun' <sup>24</sup>
تيلت تفتيقر	<i>tilet tefīḡra</i> 'herb of the serpent'

The elimination of the nominal prefix leads one step further toward compound nouns:

اطار ايلال	<i>aḡar eylal</i> 'false bishop's weed' <sup>25</sup>
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The same name is also attested as a full compound *aḡereyal* (Ibn al-Baiṭār, cf. above), with *a* reduced to *e* before *r*.

Some examples of compounds are:

اطومازير	<i>aḡumazir</i> 'figwort' <sup>26</sup>
اسغر سيف	<i>aşerisif</i> 'willow' <sup>27</sup>

(5) In personal names, Arabic (*a*)*bū* 'father of, he who has' and *ibn* 'son of' may be followed by a Berber noun in the *état d'annexion*:

بو وغيول	<i>Bū Weḡyul</i> 'he with the donkey'
ابو ينيكف	<i>Abū Yenikef</i> 'father of Hedgehog'
بن ولون	<i>ibn Welwun</i> 'son of Ram' <sup>28</sup>
بن ومغار	<i>ibn Wemḡar</i> 'son of the Chief'

Arabic *ibn* is also used in the sense 'native of':

بن وجادير	<i>ibn Wegadir</i> 'native of Agadir'
بن وندلوس	<i>ibn Wendelus</i> 'native of (al-)Andalus'

### Concluding remarks

An important question which has not been addressed thus far is: Which variety of Berber is, or which varieties are recorded in the medieval sources? Some brief remarks may be made here.

The more substantial sources record a variety of Berber which is most closely related to modern Tashelhit, as appears from a comparison of lexicon and morphology<sup>29</sup>. These sources are: Ibn Tunart's *Kitāb al-Asmā*, the Leiden Fragment, the *Kitāb al-Anṣāb* and the memoirs of al-Baiḡhaq. These sources also share some special features (e.g. reduction of *a* to *e* before *r*, *schwa* in open syllables, plurals with prefixes *u-*, *tu-*) which show that they all record the same variety of Berber. 'Old Tashelhit' may be an appropriate name for this language.

majority of them were written in al-Andalus (az-Zahrāwī, Ibn Beklāresh, Ibn 'Abd'n), or by writers of Andalusian birth working in the Middle East (Maimonides, Ibn al-Baiṭār). It is likely that a substantial body of speakers of a variety of Berber akin to Tashelhit lived in al-Andalus, and that al-Andalus is the place where this language was first committed to writing<sup>30</sup>. That there were indeed Berbers in Spain who spoke a Tashelhit-like language is shown by the fact that at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as a consequence of the *reconquista*, a group or groups of berberophones are known to have migrated from Spain to the Sous in southern Morocco, where they became known as the 'people of the ship' (*ayt uḡrabu*). One of them is Sa'id al-Kurrāmī (Seid Ak'rāmu, d. 882/1477-8), who is reputed to be the last surviving Berber scholar who had received his schooling in Granada.<sup>31</sup> The Andalusian Arabic loanwords which are still found in Tashelhit, such as *lmri* 'mirror', *lkiḡd* 'paper', *liḡrt* 'hereafter', *ššīšit* 'bonnet', etc., also point to a connection between Tashelhit and al-Andalus<sup>32</sup>.

It is noteworthy that in the *Kitāb al-Anṣāb* and the memoirs of al-Baiḡhaq, who was certainly born in the South of Morocco, the Berber phrases are repeatedly said to be 'in the language of the Gharb' (*lisān al-ḡarb*). The coastal area in Morocco which is known as 'the West' (*al-ḡarb*) is now inhabited by arabophones. The berberophone Ghomara, in northern Morocco, may be an isolated remnant of the original Berber language spoken in this area<sup>33</sup>.

The botanist 'Abdallāh ibn Šāliḡ al-Kutāmi belonged to the Kutāma or Ik'tamen tribe. Members of this tribe had settled in various parts of North-Africa and al-Andalus<sup>34</sup>. Al-Kutāmi had a druggist's shop in Marrakech. He was one of the teachers of Ibn al-Baiṭār (cf. Ullmann, 1970, p. 279).

Ibn al-Ḥaššā may have spoken a Tashelhit-like Berber language, as he worked in the service of the first sultan of the Ḥafṣid dynasty of Tunisia (cf. Ullmann, 1970, p. 236). The Ḥafṣids were the descendants of Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar (a.k.a. 'Umar Inti, d. 571/1176), a Berber of the South Moroccan Hanātā tribe and one of the close companions of Ibn Tumert.

The gradual expulsion of the Muslims from Spain in the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> century probably put an end to Old Tashelhit as a written language. A century or so later, (pre-)modern Tachelhit emerged as a literary language, in the garb of a different, newly devised orthography<sup>35</sup>.

There are also medieval sources which record a variety of Berber which is clearly not closely related to Tashelhit. In fact, the oldest examples of Berber in Arabic script known to the present author are the plant names which are found in the *Kitāb al-I'timād*, a pharmacological manual compiled in the second half of the 10th c. A.D. by Ibn al-Jazzār (d. 369/980 or 395/1004). The names are:

تيكيروتان	<i>tigirutan</i>	'dittany'
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التشتيوان	(at-) <i>teštiwan</i>	'polypody'
التاكندست	(at-) <i>tagʿendest</i>	'pellitory'
التاكوت	(at-) <i>takkewt</i>	'Euphorbia resinifera'
التانغوت	(at-) <i>taneɣut</i>	'Euphorbia pithyusa'
التانغيت	(at-) <i>taneɣit</i>	'id.'
التافروت	(at-) <i>tafrut</i>	'iris'

All of these names except one are written with the Arabic definite article. Note the plural ending *-an* with feminine nouns, which is only attested in the language of the Ghomara<sup>8</sup>. Ibn al-Jazzār lived and worked in Kairouan in Tunisia; of his ethnic background nothing is known.

The use at this early date of the letter *kāf* to represent the Berber consonant *g* in *tigirutan* may be an indication that stage 1 in the development of the Berber orthography is to be dated to even earlier time, possibly in the 9<sup>th</sup> or even 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Among the sources that were not examined for this article there are some in which eastern varieties of Berber are recorded. These include the Berber passages in Ibadite scriptures (cf. Lewicki, 1934 and Ould-Braham, 1988), the 'manuscript of Zuwāra' (cf. Motylinski, 1907) and the abundant onomastic materials in the works of Ibn Khaldūn. These eastern materials are written in an orthography which is clearly based on the same principles as the orthography of the far West. Further study of the available materials will be necessary before we can determine where and when the medieval Berber orthography originated.

#### Alphabetical list of quoted medieval Berber forms

Only the reference to the source from which a particular form is quoted is given in this list. Many of the plant names are found in more than one source. The letter *ɣ* is placed after *g* in the alphabetical order.

Abdun	Ibn 'Abdūn, <i>ʿUmdat al-ṭabīb</i> , ed. al-Khaṭṭābī, 1996 (Beirut)
Ansab	Anon., <i>Kiṭāb al-Anṣāb</i> , ed. Lévi-Provençal, 1928
Bakri	al-Bakrī, <i>Kiṭāb al-Mamālik wa-l-Masālik</i> , ed. de Slane, 1857
Baidhaq	al-Baidhaq, memoirs, ed. Lévi-Provençal, 1928
Baitar	Ibn al-Baitār, <i>al-Jāmiʿ</i> , tr. Leclerc, 1877-1883
Hassha	Ibn al-ḥašṣāʾ, <i>Mufaḍḍ al-ʿUlūm</i> , ed. Colin & Renaud, 1941
Jazzar	Ibn al-Jazzār, <i>Kiṭāb al-ʿIṭimād</i> , facsimile, 1985
Kutami	al-Kutāmī, commentary on Dioscorides, ed. Dietrich, 1988
Maimonides	Maimonides, <i>Sharḥ Asmāʾ al-ʿUqār</i> , ed. Meyerhof, 1940
Tadili	at-Tādili, <i>at-Tashawwuf</i> , ed. Faure, 1958
Tuhfa	Anon., <i>Tuhfat al-Aḥbāb</i> , ed. Renaud & Colin, 1934

Tunart Ibn 'Tunart, *Kiṭāb al-Asmāʾ*, Leiden ms. Or. 23.333 (Lq) and Or. 23.348 (La)

<i>Abu Wezreg</i> , Ansab p. 29	<i>azenzu</i> , Tuhfa no 206
<i>Abū Yenikef</i> , Tadili p. 218	<i>azeqqur</i> , Tunart La 13 <sup>v</sup>
<i>addad</i> , Baitar no 27	<i>azrud</i> , Baitar no 61
<i>aderyis</i> , Tunart Lq 23 <sup>v</sup>	<i>azuka</i> , Tunart Lq 23 <sup>r</sup>
<i>admam</i> , Kutami I 62	<i>Bū Weyyul</i> , Baidhaq p. 124
<i>adrar</i> , Tunart 23 <sup>r</sup>	<i>edduneyt</i> , Ansab p. 40
<i>aḍar eyal</i> , Tunart La 14 <sup>v</sup>	<i>efsu</i> , Tunart La 11 <sup>r</sup>
<i>adereyāl</i> , Baitar no 2	<i>elfeset</i> , Tunart Lq 24 <sup>v</sup>
<i>aḍil en wuṣṣen</i> , Tunart La 14 <sup>v</sup>	<i>elmeymun</i> , Baitar no 1655
<i>aḍu en yilel</i> , Tunart La 15 <sup>v</sup>	<i>ennes</i> , Tunart passim
<i>aḍumazir</i> , Kutami IV 83	<i>eṣṣiṣeyt</i> , Tunart La 12 <sup>v</sup>
<i>afersiw</i> , Tuhfa no 366	<i>eterenz</i> , Abdun no 22
<i>ageṣru</i> , Baitar no 6	<i>Guzūla</i> , Ansab p. 43
<i>ageṭṭum</i> , Tunart La 13 <sup>v</sup>	<i>ibaven</i> , Abdun no 1982
<i>aḡaz</i> , Tunart Lq 23 <sup>r</sup>	<i>ibn Wegadir</i> , Tadili p. 460
<i>akʿar</i> , Baitar no 3 (with double initial <i>alif</i> ), Kutami IV 91	<i>ibn Welwun</i> , Tadili p. 164
<i>alezzaḡ</i> , Hassha no 600	<i>ibn Wemyr</i> , Ansab p. 29
<i>alili</i> , Kutami IV 72	<i>ibn Wendelus</i> , Tadili p. 348
<i>alwun</i> , Tunart La 10 <sup>r</sup>	<i>idgel</i> , Tunart Lq 23 <sup>r</sup>
<i>aman yesidan</i> , Bakri p. 156	<i>lfeṣṣalen</i> , Ansab p. 45
<i>amekraz</i> , Tunart Lq 20 <sup>v</sup>	<i>iger en wesennan</i> , Baidhaq p. 78
<i>ameliles</i> , Baitar no 5	<i>iḡrey</i> , Tunart Lq 23 <sup>v</sup>
<i>amezḡur</i> , Abdun no 872	<i>ikiker</i> , Tunart La 14 <sup>r</sup>
<i>amrad</i> , Tuhfa no 204	<i>imi en teḡenni</i> , Baidhaq p. 120
<i>anaḡel</i> , Tunart La 13 <sup>r</sup>	<i>irden</i> , Tunart La 6 <sup>v</sup>
<i>angaz en yeḡef</i> , Tunart Lq 14 <sup>r</sup>	<i>isidan</i> , Tunart Lq 11 <sup>r</sup>
<i>anelkuḍ</i> , Tunart La 14 <sup>v</sup>	<i>izrey</i> , Kutami III 24
<i>angaref</i> , Tunart La 13 <sup>r</sup>	<i>iẓḡ</i> , Abdun no 1584
<i>anli</i> , Abdun no 219	<i>tabeẓẓuḡ en tili</i> , Kutami II 108
<i>armas</i> , Abdun no 1802	<i>taferẓiḡt</i> , Kutami IV 167
<i>argan</i> , Baitar no 56 (with ḡim), no 1145 (with qāf), Tunart La 13r (with kāf)	<i>tafrut</i> , Jazzar p. 55
<i>arɣis</i> , Baitar no 4	<i>tafrut wuṣṣen</i> , Kutami IV 20
<i>asasnu</i> , Kutami I 98	<i>tagʿendest</i> , Jazzar p. 147
<i>aṣyer yeḡeẓd</i> , Kutami III 91	<i>tagʿendest</i> , Abdun no 1599
<i>aṣyersif</i> , Kutami I 73	<i>taḡeyḡeyri</i> , Maimonides no 24
<i>aṣyer yeḡifier</i> , Baitar no 1604	<i>taḡut en waluḡ</i> , Baidhaq p. 93
<i>asili</i> , Kutami III 56	<i>takkewt</i> , Jazzar p. 149
<i>awserɣint</i> , Kutami IV 7	<i>talaggʿit</i> , Abdun no 939
<i>ayeddid en waman</i> , Tunart Lq 16 <sup>v</sup>	<i>tamart en taḡaffi</i> , Kutami IV 134
<i>ayerni</i> , Kutami II 149	<i>tamenmaṣṣi</i> , Kutami I 58
<i>Ayet Wersanen</i> , Ansab p. 44	<i>tamert Wemsun</i> , Baitar no 2015
<i>azeḡḡig</i> , Tunart Lq 24 <sup>v</sup>	<i>taneɣit</i> , Jazzar p. 167
	<i>taneɣut</i> , Jazzar p. 167
	<i>targa en wudi</i> , Bakri p. 59

*taryal*, Abdun no 2673  
*tasafi*, Kutami I 75  
*tasliyya*, Maimonides no 392  
*tasselt*, Kutami I 45  
*tašentit*, Tunart La f.6v°  
*tayda*, Kutami I 33  
*tazeğgašt*, Tunart La 6r°  
*tazert*, Abdun no 327  
*terrehla*, Baitar no 413  
*teštiwan*, Jazzar p. 97  
*tibi*, Tunart Lq 24v°  
*tibi en waman*, Abdun no 685  
*tibi en Meşer*, Tunart Lq 24v°  
*tibiñsert*, Tuhfa no 413  
*tibitast*, Tunart La 15r°  
*tifaf*, Kutami II 113  
*tigirutan*, Jazzar p. 142  
*tikiđa*, Tunart La 13r°  
*tilet en yenerfeđ*, Abdun no 658  
*tilet teŷiyya*, Abdun no 635  
*tiŷfaw*, Tunart Lq 25r°  
*tiqqi*, Tunart La 13r°  
*tisent en wegru*, Tunart La ff. 7r°

*Tiŷŷawin*, Baidhaq p. 93  
*tizext*, Tunart Lq 23r°  
*tiznirt*, Tunart Lq 23r°  
*tululit*, Kutami II 156  
*tunin en wegellid*, Bakri p. 156  
*tunzifin*, Tunart La 6v°  
*turufin*, Tunart La 15r°  
*turza*, Bakri p. 179  
*tuwedja en yegran*, Tunart La 25r°  
*udad*, Tuhfa no 17  
*Uguzulen*, Ansab p. 43  
*Uzafen*, Ansab p. 46  
*ukermuden*, Tunart Lq 25r°  
*ukkan*, Tunart La 14r°  
*ummad*, Tunart Lq 23r°  
*wamsa*, Tunart La 14r°  
*war ellay*, Kutami IV 168  
*warellay*, Tunart La 14v°  
*waylellu*, Tunart La 14r°  
*xizzu*, Tuhfa no 93  
*yeddex'ten*, Kutami IV 168  
*yeludi*, Tunart La 14r°

## Notes

1. Some of the basic rules of the medieval orthography were noted by Marcy in an article (1932).
2. The same edition was published twice (Rabat, 1990 and Beirut, 1996), with some revisions and a different numerations of the entries.
3. Some of these names were studied by Chaker (1981).
4. An edition of Ibn Tunart's Berber materials is in preparation by the present author. For a brief description of this source see also van den Boogert, 1998, pp. 11-13.
5. An alphabetical list of quoted forms with references is appended at the end of this article.
6. Lévi-Provençal has made several changes in the spelling of the Berber materials in the printed edition. The following exposé is based on an examination of the photographic plates added to the edition (esp. plate III).
7. On the use of *madda* in Maghribi-Arabic spelling see van den Boogert, 1989, p. 33.
8. Also written as one word *warellay*. Etymologically *war* 'he who has not' and *\*allay* 'stalk, stem' (cf. Touareg *allay* 'javelin', *tallaq* 'wooden shaft of a lance?'). The epiphytic doder (Cuscuta epithymum) indeed has no rooted stem, cf. also its name in Tashelhit, *azzar n tmytwin* 'women's hair'.
9. At a later stage, the two values of each letter were differentiated by forming the separate letters *čim* and *gáf* by means of the addition of three diacritical points to *gim* and *káf*.
10. Ibn al-Ḥašḥā, ed. Colin & Renaud, 1941, no 600.
11. On *g > ž* see Kossmann, 1995.

12. The alternative spelling *الكدموي* *al-Kadmiwī* is also found.
13. Ibn 'Abdūn, ed. al-Khaṭṭābī, 1996, no 1584.
14. Cf. also Spanish *mezquita*.
15. Berber *اوگوزولن* *Uguzulen*, modern Tashelhit *lg'zuln*: name of a tribal federation of the Anti-Atlas, 'Gzoula' in the French orthography.
16. The noun *ak'tar*, mentioned y al-Kutāmī and Ibn al-Baijār, contains what is perhaps the earliest attested example of spirantization. Ibn al-Baijār quotes Abi al-'Abbās an-Nabāṭī saying that this plant is 'well-known in the eastern part of the 'Udwa' (*ma'rif bi-šarq bilād al-'udwa*).
17. Etymologically *yedde?* 'he sticks (to)' (3sgm) + *ten* 'them' (3plm): the sticky seeds of mistletoe cling to the branches of trees where they germinate.
18. Fifteen examples of initial double *alif* representing *a-* in Greek names are found in Dietrich's *Dioscurides triumphans* (see index to the Arabic text).
19. In modern standard orthography, the *hurūf al-madd* are always written without *sukūn*.
20. In the spelling of entry no 5, *ameliles*, Ibn al-Baijār does not indicate whether the *yā* 'has *sukūn*. He simply states *al-nīm wa-l-lāmdn minhu maksūra wa-s-sin muḥmala*, 'the *nīm* and the two *līms* have *kasra*, the *sīn* is without diacritical points.'
21. Explicitly Berber, explicitly vocalized *bi-faḥ at-tā' wa-r-rā'*.
22. All three forms are attested in more than one source; it is unlikely that they are misspellings or corruptions.
23. Cf. also the ethnonyms *Uguzulen* and *Uzafen* mentioned above.
24. Amsoun or Msoun is the name of a valley located north-west of Taza where the plant which bears this name (a variety of dodder) is said to grow.
25. Litt. 'bird's foot', *aḍar* 'foot' and *aylal* 'bird'.
26. Litt. 'smell-of-dung': *aḍu* 'odour' and *amazir* 'dung'.
27. Litt. 'river tree': *ašer* 'bush, tree' and *asif* 'river'.
28. Cf. Ibn Tunart *alwun* 'ram' (Arabic *kabḥ*).
29. This point is elaborated in van den Boogert, 1998, p. 12.
30. On Berbers in al-Andalus in general see de Felipe, 1993 and 1997.
31. Cf. Justinard, 1933, pp. 220-224.
32. Standard Arabic *ā* often changed to *ī* in Andalusian colloquial Arabic; compare the standard forms *al-mir* 'ā(ī), *al-kāyid*, *al-āxira*(ī), *āš-šāyīya*(ī). Pedro de Alcalá actually mentions the forms *miri* 'mirror' and *xixia* 'bonnet'. See also van den Boogert, 1998, p. 195.
33. The present-day Ghomara claim that they are related to the Chleuh, the speakers of Tashelhit (cf. Colin, 1929).
34. See *EL2*, 'Kutāma'.
35. The oldest preserved text in the 'new' orthography is the '*Aqā'id ad-Dīn* by Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abdallāh aṣ-Ṣanhājī (a.k.a. Brahīm AĀnag, d. 1005/1597). See van den Boogert, 1997, chapter 5.
36. Cf. also the name of Tétouan, litt. 'the wells' (*Tiŷŷawin* *تيطاوين* in the memoirs of al-Baidhaq).

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« M.S. — Ussun amaziy »

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Cette collection prend la suite, en la recentrant sur le domaine berbère, de l'ancienne série " Etudes ethnolinguistiques Maghreb-Sahara " de la SELAF, dans laquelle sont parus sept volumes entre 1982 et 1988.

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ÉTUDES BERBÈRES  
ET  
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KARL-G. PRASSE

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## Quelques repères sur Karl-G. Prasse

Notre collègue Karl Prasse a fêté ses 70 ans en août 1999. Son apport scientifique est tout à fait considérable, principalement pour les Études berbères – son œuvre touarègue est absolument fondamentale –, mais aussi, plus largement, pour la dialectologie arabe (avec ses travaux sur l'arabe du Caire) et la linguistique historique et comparée chamito-sémitique.

Indépendamment de son œuvre personnelle, K. Prasse a également su encadrer et encourager de nombreux chercheurs autochtones, et mettre en place avec eux des collaborations sur la longue durée. Collaborations particulièrement fécondes qui ont permis la publication d'une série d'instruments et documents scientifiques de première importance sous l'égide de l'université de Copenhague.

Ce recueil d'articles est un amical hommage au collègue exemplaire.

## Quelques repères sur l'homme

Karl-Gottfried Prasse est né le 14 août 1929 à Hambourg (Allemagne) (mais il est de nationalité danoise).

Il commence des études de linguistique générale et comparée à l'Université de Copenhague en 1948. En 1950, il se réoriente vers l'Égyptologie.

Au cours de sa période de formation, il a accompli plusieurs séjours d'études à l'étranger :

- en 1952-53 à Paris (bourse d'Etat française), où il étudie le berbère, l'arabe marocain, l'amharique à l'Ecole des Langues Orientales ;
- en 1953-54 à Rome (bourse d'Etat italienne), où il étudie l'amharique et le somali

En 1955, il soutient sa thèse, qui est couronnée de la médaille d'or : *Les noms en berbère, comparés à ceux de l'égyptien et du sémitique* (morphologie) (voir "Travaux et publications")

Il s'engage alors définitivement dans la voie de la recherche linguistique et effectue plusieurs nouveaux séjours d'études :

- à Paris, au printemps 1958 (bourse de jeune chercheur), pour effectuer le dépouillement des notes de voyages sur le vocabulaire touareg laissées par A. Basset.